

national park service

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John A. Dell'Osso
(415) 663-8522, ext. 226

Point Reyes National Seashore Participates in Innovative New Science Program

Superintendent Don Neubacher announced today that Point Reyes National Seashore in partnership with Tomales Middle School and Bolinas School will be participating in a training program for an innovative new educational partnership between the Exxon Corporation, the National Park Foundation (NPF), and the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA).

The Parks as Resources for Knowledge in Science (P.A.R.K.S.) program was created to advance science education partnerships between National Parks, schools, and local communities. The structure of the P.A.R.K.S. program builds on NSTA's "Building a Presence for Science," which aims to improve science education and bring science teaching practices in line with the National Science Education Standards.

"National Parks offer tremendous opportunities for students to observe and study natural processes and resources. With very little effort, students can walk on the San Andreas fault, observe the migration of gray whales and northern elephant seals, and experience the tule elk rut merely by visiting Point Reyes National Seashore," said Don Neubacher, Superintendent of Point Reyes National Seashore. "Point Reyes National Seashore will use this grant to encourage teachers to utilize the seashore as an extension of their classrooms. In partnership with area middle school teachers, we will be developing a sixth through eighth grade teachers guide that highlights the park resources which provide exceptional opportunities for students to understand science."

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On September 3, 1998 the Exxon Corporation announced a pledge of \$1.5 million to the

Point Reyes National Seashore Point Reyes Station, California 94956

P.A.R.K.S. program to enhance science and environmental education programs. Exxon's

grant, which will be distributed among 36 National Parks over a three-year period, will promote science literacy, provide opportunities for students and teachers to use National Parks as “hands-on” learning laboratories, and strengthen students’ understanding of National Park resources.

“It is imperative that we increase young people’s interest and understanding of practical science,” said Tony Atkiss, Exxon’s Vice President for Public Affairs. “The National Park Service, together with the National Park Foundation, has an outstanding tradition of developing and supporting innovative educational programs. Exxon’s contribution will help the NPF strengthen the quality and scope of science and environmental education efforts in communities throughout the country.”

Throughout the P.A.R.K.S. program three-year duration, Ohio State University will conduct ongoing assessments to ensure program effectiveness and to facilitate replications. Upon P.A.R.K.S.’ completion, lessons learned from the program will be published and made available to all 376 National Parks, as well as the education community.

“Exxon’s significant commitment to the National Park Foundation will create lasting and beneficial partnerships between communities, schools, and our National Parks,” said Jim Maddy, President of the National Park Foundation.

The National Park Foundation is the official nonprofit partner of the National Park Service. Created by Congress in 1967, the Foundation raises support from corporations, foundations, and individuals to preserve and enhance America’s National Parks. Over the past five years, NPF has raised more than \$21 million in direct support for the National Parks.

Exxon’s pledge to the NPF is part of the corporation’s on-going commitment to education. In 1997, Exxon Corporation and the Exxon Education Foundation together provided more than \$24 million to support education in the United States.

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With more than 53,000 members nationwide, the National Science Teachers Association is America’s largest organization committed to excellence and innovation in science teaching

and learning. Through conventions, award-winning publications, journals and professional development opportunities, NSTA keeps science teachers current in teaching, science content, research, and available resources and technology.

The National Seashore encompasses over 71,000 acres of diverse landscape for recreational and educational pursuits. Visitation to the National Seashore now exceeds 2.6 million visitors each year. Over 32,000 acres of wilderness are protected from human development for future generations. For a wild place to exist so close to a seven million person metropolitan area is a marvel in itself. Biological diversity flourishes within Seashore boundaries with over 850 plant species found within the Park's boundary, about 17% of the California flora. Additionally, with over 458 species of birds recorded, Point Reyes National Seashore easily claims the prize for the greatest avian diversity in any National Park. In fact, the species total here is higher than the total for forty other states. This total represents 45% of the species of avian fauna found in North America!

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